

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2013

## Chateau du Tariquet Armagnac

Word is apparently out that some crazy whiskey blogger is reviewing Armagnacs as I've started to receive unsolicited samples. As I always say, it's never too late to sell out. Today I'll be reviewing two samples I received from Chateau du Tariquet. Tariquet is a large grower/producer located in the Bas-Armagnac region. They use new, lightly toasted, fine grain barrels for the first few years of aging, presumably then transferring the spirit into used barrels. The label implies, but does not state outright, that coloring is not used (noting that the light color of the brandy is due to the lightly toasted oak barrels...and not caramel?).



### **Chateau du Tariquet XO, 40% abv. (\$60)**

The Tariquet XO is made from 60% ugni blanc and 40% baco grapes. The "100 years" statement on the bottle refers to the age of the chateau, not the age of the Armagnac in the bottle; the youngest brandy in the bottle is 15 years old.

The nose has a very light spice to it. The palate has more fruit than I've tasted in other Armagnacs along with some chocolate, then the spice comes in, but it's still very subtle. The finish is fruity with a tinge of bitterness (not in a bad way). This is more similar to a Cognac than the Armagnacs I've tasted recently, having more fruit and less spice than some of the bolder Armagnacs. While it's not overly complex, it's very sippable and pleasant. At cask strength, I bet this one would be really stunning. (Tariquet does make some cask strength expressions).

### **Chateau du Tariquet Blanche Armagnac, 46%**

Blanche Armagnac, much like white whiskey, is a recent development. The category was created in 2005 for unaged spirits (all other Armagnac is required to be aged in oak barrels for at least one year). Blanche Armagnac, literally "white Armagnac," may not be aged in oak but is required to be stored in inert containers (glass or steel, for example) for three months. The Tariquet Blanche is made from 100% folle blanche grapes (though the concept of "Blanche Armagnac" shouldn't be confused with the "folle blanche" grape). I haven't seen this on the shelves yet, so I don't know what the retail price is.

If you read this blog with any regularity, you know that I'm not a fan of white whiskey, and I'm not sure that I feel any differently about unaged brandy. Smelling this, it's indistinguishable from white whiskey. Nosing blind, I would definitely have guessed that it was a white whiskey of some sort. The palate, though, gives it away as a brandy; it's sweeter than whiskey with some fruit notes beginning to develop late in the palate. The finish is my favorite part, with some very distinct raisin notes and some mulled wine on the nose. It's not at all bad for what it is; I actually like it better than most white whiskeys, but, well, that isn't saying much. It's always educational to try unaged versions of spirits, but I've never understood the urge to buy them. If you're into unaged spirits or mixology, though, this would be a good choice.

From these two samples, Chateau du Tariquet has definitely piqued my interest. I may track down some of their cask strength brandies to see how they measure up at full strength.